



# ANTONY & CLEOPATRA

Directed by Jacqui Somerville

Sat 2 & Sun 3 Nov 2024  
ROMA STREET PARKLAND AMPHITHEATRE



## CAST

Mark Antony | Stephen Hirst  
Cleopatra | Ashlee Lollback  
Octavius Caesar | Andrew Hearle  
Enobarbus | Danny Brown  
Lepidus | Colin W Smith  
Charmian | Siena D'Arienzo  
Alexas | Francesca Savige  
Iras/Octavia | Sarah McLeod  
Messenger | Tomas Pocilujko  
Canidius | Giuseppe D'Allura

## FESTIVAL STAFF

Festival Founder | Gary Thorpe OAM  
Classic Arts Manager | Maggie Findlay  
Marketing/Events Coordinator | Wendy Lang  
Ticketing Manager | John Carrier  
Intern | Chloe Evans

## CREATIVES AND CREW

Director | Jacqui Somerville  
Assistant Director | Xanthe Jones  
Creative Producer | Ben Lynskey  
Fight Director | Jason McKell  
Stage Manager | Caitlin Scott  
Costume Design & Choreography | Xanthe Jones  
Set & Costume Assistant | Stefan Cooper-Fox  
Lighting & Audio | Vast AV  
Staging | Pro-Stage Queensland

## PRE-PLAY ENTERTAINMENT

Shakespearean Dance Workshop & Demonstration  
Dr Heather Blasdale Clarke  
with the Phillip's Dog Ensemble

Swordplay Demonstration  
Prima Spada School of Fence

Shakespearean Language Talk  
Emeritus Professor Roland 'Roly' Sussex

Facepainting  
Zoe Tempany from Super Party Heroes

Lend us thy thoughts  
in this short festival survey!



*"Eternity was in our lips  
and in our eyes."*

- ANTONY & CLEOPATRA, ACT 1 SCENE 3

Our patron is Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland

*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today,  
and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.*

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# ANTONY & CLEOPATRA



## Director's note

The text of Antony and Cleopatra was not printed until the Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays were published in 1623, meaning it was not performed in Shakespeare's lifetime. His source material was Plutarch's *Life of Mark Antony* where the emphasis on Antony's relationship with Cleopatra was a central focus; as were the complexities of their personalities.

There are many parallels between Shakespeare's writing and that of his source. The most well-known of these is the description by Enobarbus in Act 2 Scene 2. Here Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony is described as it appears in Plutarch's version almost word for word; had Shakespeare lived now he would probably have been facing charges of plagiarism. Plutarch was writing 200 years after Cleopatra's death, discovering traces of the way her own people had seen her and revealing a contrasting view from how the Romans saw her; he depicted her as a flawed character as changeable as water. Shakespeare synthesises these character attributes in Antony and Cleopatra to create an enthralling and mercurial Queen. I wonder if this play had been performed in Shakespeare's time what Queen Elizabeth I would have thought of it. Could the recently deceased Elizabethan Queen have been an inspiration for this character too?

At the heart of our production is the relationship between Antony & Cleopatra, an ill-fated love story between two people of power and circumstance from two different worlds that collide and implode. Xanthe Jones has trimmed the play down to reflect their journey as well as amalgamate certain characters to align with their central plot. We have focused on the difference between the worlds of Egypt and Rome: Cleopatra's Egypt is feminine, passionate and exotic and the world of Rome is cold, brutal and harsh. Xanthe Jones has also created wonderful costumes that highlight this and Ben Lyskey has created a set design that effectively serves the antithetic worlds of the play.

## Background & story

Julius Caesar is dead, and the Roman Empire is ruled by three men: Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar, and Lepidus. Mark Antony commands the eastern Mediterranean and lives in Egypt with his lover Cleopatra.

A short while into the play we discover the death of Antony's wife, Fulvia, and the rebellion of Pompey against his fellow ruler Octavius. As a consequence, Antony is then forced to leave for Rome, with his friend Enobarbus.

In Rome, Octavius and Antony meet and argue over his escapades in Egypt. They decide that their friendship must be cemented by a political marriage between Antony and Octavia, Caesar's sister. Enobarbus refuses to believe Antony will desert Cleopatra and tells others of their relationship.

Cleopatra receives the news of Antony's marriage. After a fit of rage and jealousy, she realises that Octavia offers no real romantic challenge. When Antony and Octavia reach Athens, they learn that Caesar has revoked his peace treaty and attacked Pompey. Antony sends Octavia back to Rome to try to renew peace, and he goes to Egypt to raise an army with Cleopatra.

Caesar, disgusted by Antony abandoning Octavia, declares war on Antony and Cleopatra. Antony decides to fight at sea at Actium but is defeated.

Antony then chooses to fight Caesar on land, but his army is losing faith in their leader. Enobarbus deserts Antony for Caesar's army, leaving Antony saddened, not angry. Enobarbus is overcome with guilt for his betrayal of Antony and dies alone in his grief.

At the battle, Cleopatra's men flee, abandoning Antony. When Antony fears that Cleopatra has betrayed him to Caesar, she sends false word that she is dead, hoping to win over his affections once more. Antony is devastated by the news and resolves to stab himself with his sword.

Cleopatra's messenger goes to inform him that the queen is still alive and finds him dying alone. Antony is then taken up into the monument by Cleopatra and her waiting women, and he dies in Cleopatra's arms.

Cleopatra cannot bear the thought of being a prisoner of the Romans. When Caesar believes that she is now his prisoner, she has Alexas bring her poisonous snakes in a basket. Her waiting women dress her in her robes before she lays an asp on her breast and dies, along with her women. Caesar, upon discovering the bodies, orders that Antony and Cleopatra be buried together. Now unhindered in his quest for Egypt, and conveniently lacking in political foes, Caesar returns to Rome and becomes Emperor.